

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTA #1512 2270858
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 140858Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3018
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE 0606
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1935

S E C R E T ASTANA 001512

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/14/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [OVIP](#) [PARM](#) [PHUM](#) [ETRD](#) [OREP](#) [KZ](#)
SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN -- CODEL REID MEETS WITH PM MASIMOV,
OPPOSITION AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Classified By: Ambassador J. Ordway, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) CODEL Reid met with Kazakhstan's Prime Minister Masimov on August 7 to discuss several aspects of the U.S. - Kazakhstan relationship. Masimov opened the meeting by highlighting Kazakhstan's progress on democratic and economic liberalization since independence. He thanked U.S. companies for their investments and contributions to Kazakhstan's rapid economic growth. Noting the dampening effect of the global financial crisis, Masimov said that proposed changes to the tax code (which would lower corporate taxes and taxes on extractive industries) should help reinvigorate the economy. On food security in the region, Masimov stressed that Kazakhstan is ready to help its neighbors in the event last winter's shortages repeat themselves. Turning to democratic reform, Masimov said that President Nazarbayev's policy has always been "economics first, politics second," and Kazakhstan has finally reached the level of economic development where democratic reform was not only possible, but necessary.

¶2. (S) Sen. Reid commended Kazakhstan's progress and expressed hope of continuing close cooperation on such issues as the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program. Sen. Bingaman said that Kazakhstan could play an important role in encouraging Iran to disarm. Masimov agreed by saying that as a mostly-Muslim state with a strong non-proliferation record, Kazakhstan could serve as an example to Iran and added that the GOK stands ready to work closely with the international community on Iran's disarmament. Sen. Nelson encouraged the GOK to continue close cooperation on intelligence matters. Turning the conversation to Afghanistan, Sen. Isakson expressed hope that Kazakhstan will join the U.S. and Afghanistan and support OSCE involvement in securing Afghanistan's northern border. Masimov said the GOK was not opposed to the initiative, adding that he will visit Afghanistan in September and would welcome consultations with the Embassy before the trip. In closing, Sen. Menendez said he hoped Kazakhstan's rapid economic liberalization will be closely followed by political reform, to which Masimov jokingly replied that NDI and IRI will not rest until it does.

¶3. (C) Separately, the Senators met with the leaders of opposition parties and civil society, who told the delegation that democratic reform was severely lagging in the country. Not surprisingly, the opposition party leaders derided President Nazarbayev and his ruling Nur Otan party for effectively blocking all competition on the political scene. NGO representatives shared the view that progress on political liberalization and human rights was not only stalled but in some instances was moving backwards, like with the pending religion legislation. Sen. Reid thanked the participants for their honest views and underlined that Kazakhstan's democratic reform remained a top priority for the United States.

¶4. (U) CODEL Reid did not clear this cable.

